

any sign of anxiety. This assured ego attitude alone makes safe all the directly libidinal positions, contacts, caresses, etc. We can on this basis make out a kind of series of relations between parent and child from safety to danger, starting with what I will call (a) the ' ego ' parent, supplying a full complement to the immature ego in satisfying or restraining in accordance with both realities, external and psychic, not stimulating beyond possibilities of satisfaction—a purely ideal parent, of course, because apart from the inevitable personal complications, who is able in all circumstances to understand or to be able to satisfy the psychic needs of the infant ? This I call the tragedy of human infancy, that the mother's understanding and help with regard to the baby's physical needs is so enormously in advance of similar possibilities with regard to its psychical needs.

" Then through various grades (b), (c), etc., of these relationships we reach, say (g), the parent who satisfies, stimulates and restrains the child with strong admixture of non-ego, of id and super-ego attitude, from dictating by mired reality—the average parent who shows all varieties in the proportion of non-ego to ego attitude. Then comes the situation mentioned earlier (5), in which the infant is left alone with strong wish tensions, unable either to satisfy them or summon help, leaving the ego weakened by physical and psychic exhaustion, with a memory trace corresponding roughly to the feeling, ' It may be dangerous to want something you cannot have.' Lastly, we reach (v—z) situations in which the parents are present, but stimulate the child's libido without either satisfying or restraining, disregarding the child in their mutual loves and angers ; ' libido ' parents with whom anything may happen. The child's ego-support fails, its own ego is weakened as in the last, the '

left alone ' situation, but its libido is stimulated and unsatisfied at the same time ; therefore the balance in favour of the ego is at its lowest possible ebb. Of such situations the prototype and the most extreme is (z) the primal scene.¹ Out of such scenes is built up the feeling ' it is very dangerous to want or feel too much; it must not happen'. The explanation of the immediate answer of libido to libido in these scenes, i.e., of the child's awareness of them, remains as far as I know an unsolved riddle, but at least it is clear that it is on a par^r i.e., parental intercourse.